

Curb, Dustin (DES)

From: Nancy Helget <felget@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, October 5, 2022 2:25 PM
To: DES SBCC
Subject: Proposed residential energy code amendments

External Email

Chair Doan and Council members,

Thank you for adopting recent changes to the code provisions applicable to commercial and large multifamily apartment buildings. I'm submitting this comment to support the Council's adoption of all the proposed amendments to the residential building energy code.

My comment is similar to the comment I submitted in support of the commercial code changes. The comment is equally relevant to the proposed residential energy code because the residential code changes are an essential complement to the commercial and large multifamily apartment building provisions. Both are necessary to address climate issues.

I live in Vancouver, Washington. I'm a mother and a grandmother. I'm not a scientist. I'm not a builder or developer. I'm not a health care specialist. But I'm a citizen who is very concerned about the world our generation will leave for my children and grandchildren.

I try to read as much as I can about what we need to do to address climate change. There's no lack of information. It seems as though I'm almost daily bombarded with new information about the extent of climate change and the devastating effects it will have in the very near future if we don't act. Yet it seems the world is in slow motion when it comes to taking action. Lately, there's a global push to make more fossil fuels available (oil in particular) to keep gasoline prices low. That's the opposite of the direction we should be moving. I support the building code amendments because they represent an effort to reduce, not increase, fossil fuel emissions.

The proposed residential building code amendments and the adopted commercial building code amendments tell me my state is willing to take action. I'm proud to live in a state that's committed to addressing climate change by enacting meaningful laws, codes and regulations that challenge the way we've blindly become accustomed to doing business. I appreciate all the work the council and its staff have done to arrive at the proposed residential building code amendments.

The information I've read tells me that in Washington, buildings account for over one-fourth of all emissions and buildings are the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, buildings are the fastest growing source of emissions.

Our state is growing. That requires more residential development. More residences without an electrical source for space and water heating mean more greenhouse gas emissions. We need lower, not higher greenhouse gas emissions.

My city, Vancouver, is in the process of adopting a climate action plan. Although the Mayor and City Council are committed to accomplishing that, the process is slow. In the meantime, the city is approving major development projects. Because the current building code doesn't require it, the developments will be built without the infrastructure to install heat pumps and electrical

connections for hot water. The developments will likely be built to use natural gas to heat space and water.

The resulting developments will be around for many years. To the extent the development buildings rely on fossil fuels (natural gas) to heat space and water, the buildings will be responsible for greenhouse gas emissions for many years to come. Retrofitting to allow heat pumps and electric water heaters will be expensive. The builders and developers won't likely be the parties who will pay to retrofit. It makes so much more sense to require the electric infrastructure now.

The proposed residential building code amendments would give my city undisputed authority to require electric space and water heating in new residential developments. That's an important piece of any climate action plan. The changes will benefit my city and Vancouver residents.

The above comments relate mainly to the electrification of space and water heating. But I support all of the other proposed amendments. I particularly support the proposed amendment regarding ventilation of gas stoves.

We have a gas stove, although we're in the process of switching to electric. We've always had a gas stove. I grew up with one in my house. Until recently, we didn't know we were subjecting ourselves and our family to dangerous emissions.

Our children and I have asthma. Although there's no way to know whether our stove emissions contributed to that condition, we would have made different decisions earlier had we known emissions were an issue. I doubt most people are aware of that danger. Requiring ventilation will serve to protect all of us who use gas stoves.

The proposed residential building code changes are necessary. The changes are warranted in light of current science. And the changes make economic sense. Washington's 2021 State Energy Strategy found that electrifying buildings is the lowest-cost pathway to meeting the state's climate goal of reducing emissions 95% from 1990 levels by 2050. It seems like a no brainer.

I have one last comment. It's not a substantive comment about the code amendments. Recently, I listened to colleagues of Paul Farmer discussing his work in Haiti and Rwanda. They said he referred to a hospital his organization Partners in Health built as the House of Yes. People at those hospitals and in the organization strove to not say no, but to think in terms of what they could do and stretch themselves to make the possibilities happen. Of course, I'm paraphrasing, but it made me think that we all have to do that when we're deciding what we can do to address climate change. We need to stretch beyond the easy solutions and actions and think in terms of larger possibilities. I think the proposed residential building code amendments do that. Please adopt all of them.

Thank you for your work and for considering my comments.

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